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ABSTRACT

This Child Development Associate (CDA) training module is designed to help CDA interns to understand, assess, and foster the development of children's communication skills. Objectives are stipulated, activities for achieving each objective are suggested, and an assessment checklist is provided. A study guide emphasizes (1) the nature and use of communication skills, (2) normal development of communication skills, (3) language assessment procedures, (4) special help for children with special needs, (5) individual differences in the development of communication skills, (6) teacher techniques, and (7) the importance of the preschool teacher in encouraging children's expressive and receptive skills. A check sheet and guidelines for language assessment are included. (Author/RH)

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Competency Based Training Module #13

FOSTERING COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

IN THE

EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

by

Patricia Graves

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NOTE TO THE INTERN:

This CDA training module has been prepared as a guide for you and your CDA Advisor to help you to develop certain practical skills necessary for your work in an early childhood center. Although it contains many useful ideas, it is not intended to be a self-study program. Many decisions about your training experiences are left up to you and your CDA Advisor. The activities given in this module are "suggested" activities, and should be used if they are appropriate to your learning needs. You or your Advisor may come up with other activities more appropriate for your particular situation, children, or background of experience and training.

Your Advisor will evaluate your performance in each of the objectives. S/he may do so right away on the basis of skills you already have, or s/he may evaluate you after you have done some learning activities, or both. If you think you already have the skills required by some of the objectives, you should ask to be evaluated right away. You may not have to do any activities for some of the objectives. You do, however, have to demonstrate the required skills for your advisor; you cannot just tell s/him that you have the skills. If your advisor has already observed some of the skills before you entered this module, s/he may check you off on those skills without further observation.

When your Advisor has evaluated your performance in an objective area as satisfactory, s/he will initial and date that objective as completed in your copy of this module. When all of the objectives have been initialled, you have completed the requirements of this module and have earned credit. Keep this module as your permanent record of completion, and as a reference to use in your classroom.

As you can see, how fast you are able to complete this module depends on a lot of things: how much time and effort you can put into it; how much help your Advisor can give you; how much experience and training you have already had.

The Arizona/Nevada HSST/CDA Program hopes that you find your participation in CDA a valuable and practical training experience. We would appreciate any suggestions you may have for improvements in the training program and in this module.

FOSTERING COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

IN THE

EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

CDA TRAINING MODULE #13

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....Page 1

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS.....Page 3

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENT.....Page 4

STUDY GUIDE.....Page 10

This module relates to the following CDA Competencies:*

B. ADVANCE PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCE
(see item 2)

C. BUILD POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT AND INDIVIDUAL STRENGTH
(see item 7)

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*for reference, see the Arizona HSST/CDA "CDA Assessment"

FOSTERING COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

IN THE

EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

INTRODUCTION

Communication means transmitting and receiving information. The ability to communicate with others is an acquired skill. It begins to develop at birth and broadens and increases throughout a lifetime.

Communication takes many forms: pictures, facial expressions, physical actions, and language are some common ones. Some forms of communication convey certain kinds of messages more effectively than others. Facial expressions may tell things about our feelings we cannot express with words. On the other hand, we can use only words to organize our thinking and activities or to explain a complex idea. One important part of learning to communicate is learning to select the most appropriate form for our message. The three year old may express his anger by crying or by hitting the object of his anger; the four year old may be ready to learn to use words to express his anger.

The skill of communicating is the process of learning to recognize and use the symbols of one's society. Actions, gestures, drawings, spoken and written words are all symbols which stand for real objects or ideas. Learning to understand and use these symbols is learning to communicate.

The need to communicate is so strong that nearly all children with normal physical abilities reach the preschool classroom with a remarkable amount of skill. Even so, children at the age of four or five do not possess completely developed communication skills. They are only beginning the long process of learning to use verbal language which will later lead them to be able to read and write. There are many uses of gestures, music, drawing and other nonverbal skills which they have not yet learned. They need much practice, not only in learning these skills, but in selection of the most appropriate ones for a particular message.

Communication skills should not be taught in isolation or in special lessons as a separate subject. The should be fostered as a part of regular events in the classroom. Communication is being enhanced on the playground, in the block or housekeeping area, the library corner and in every activity and project during the day. These skills are possibly the most vital things a child learns at preschool and the most basic to his emotional health and future success, both in and out of school.

This module is designed to help you understand, assess, and foster the development of the communication skills of the children in your classroom, and to do so within the context of all that is happening throughout the day. The techniques

offered in this module are intended to help the child develop communication skills in his primary language, or the one he uses most commonly. The child's communication skills should be assessed in this language in which he is most functional, and emphasis for the development of communication skills should be within the child's primary language. Development of communication skills is an important goal of any preschool program, and is the focus of this module; the introduction of a second language, or the development of functional bilingualism (where these are required) are long-range goals, and are dealt with in Module #29 - Planning and Implementing an Effective Bilingual Program.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Before you start work on this module read the following questions and see if you can answer them.

1. How many ways can you think of that you and the children have communicated with each other during the past week?

2. Do you know that reading is more than just reading words? Can you list some things which children in your class can read?

3. If someone talks to you in a language you do not understand, are they communicating?

4. Why is listening considered part of language development?

5. What are some of the things your children should be learning about language and communication?

6. How can you and your staff help them develop language skills?

7. How can you tell if children in your group need special help in communicating?

8. Why do children use "dirty" words? What should you do when they use them?

After completing work on the module, look at these questions again. How do your answers compare? How much have you learned?

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENT

CDA Intern's Name_____

Date of Entry_____Date of Completion_____

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
1. The intern displays an awareness of the variety of ways in which people can communicate with each other. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	1. Read Section I of the Study Guide. a. List some of the ways you communicate with people. b. Try activities which encourage you to use ways you do not use often. EXAMPLE: How many ways can you communicate the idea of running? (A drawing? Actions? Is there music you could use?) c. Watch activities in your classroom. List examples of items you have listed in "a" above. d. Select a method of communication used infrequently in your classroom. Plan, practice and use with the children several activities involving this skill. EXAMPLE: If you do not use music often select some short records for listening in a small group. e. Study a picture with the children.
2. The intern will know basic patterns in development of communication skills as observed in most children. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	2. Read Section II of the Study Guide. a. Collect samples of sentences from children in your classroom showing various levels of linguistic skill in the child's primary language. EXAMPLE: To stimulate conversation which would produce such samples you might study a picture. It might go like this: Say "Tell me about this picture." PICTURE OF A BOY RUNNING Child #1 - Child has no words for it but can imitate action of the boy in the picture.

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
	Child #2 - "That's a boy." He takes no note of the action and only identifies the object. Child #3 - "The boy is running." A complete discription of the object and action. Child #4 - "The boy is running because he is going to school and he is going to miss the bus." This child not only discribes the picture, but can creatively make up a story around it. b. Make a chart showing basic sequences of language development. c. Be able to explain to your advisor how nonverbal communication skills are used by children.
3. The intern recognizes and accepts the communication skills and limitations on these skills which each child brings with him to the classroom. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	3. Read Section III of the Study Guide a. Read the Assessment materials. b. Discuss with your advisor and staff members how this material is to be used. c. Follow guidance for each assessment item and fill out an assessment form on each child. Place in child's folder. NOTE: This tool is not to be treated as a test, keep it handy, take your time and follow general directions carefully. Keep the intent of the material clear and the methods of gathering information as suggested. Change words, pictures or specific material to fit children's language and culture.
4. The intern is able to detect children who are having serious communication problems and refer them for help. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	4. Read Section IV of the Study Guide. a. After assessing your students, prepare a referral for any child who needs special help. b. If you have no student who needs help, make up a case and follow through as if the situation were real. Submit forms to your advisor. c. Visit another classroom and observe children for language difficulties.

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
5. The intern is able to develop a set of appropriate goals for growth in communication skills for children in his/her class. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	5. Read sample goals in Section V of the Study Guide. a. Evaluate these in the context of the child's primary language and the current skills. b. Make a set of goals for your class. Post these where you will see them often.
6. The intern is able to plan and use general techniques which foster language growth in the children in the classroom. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	6. Read suggestions in Section VI of the Study Guide. a. Tape a small group activity in which you are talking with the children. Apply suggestions to your taped conversations. How could it have been improved? b. Select an activity or event in upcoming lesson plans. Plan ahead of time and practice what you want to say. Record the activity. Was their improvement in your technique? c. Make a list with your advisor of the techniques you need to practice most. Plan and practice for these.
7. The intern recognizes that children need to practice communication skills with each other, and provides a great deal of time, opportunity and encouragement for children to talk and play together. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	7. a. Look at your center's schedule. How much time do children spend listening? How much time are they free to talk and communicate in other ways? b. Tape some conversations between children. What skills are being developed? c. Make notes of other forms of communication you observe children practicing with each other. d. Plan with your staff to try some new ways to encourage children to share ideas and feelings with each other. 1) Meal time conversations. 2) More free time to select own interests. 3) Smaller groups for group time activities. 4) Sharing time each day in small groups. 5) Bus activities that encourage communication.

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
7.2 The intern provides opportunities for children to communicate with adults, demonstrating a two way process in which he/she and the children both give and receive from each other. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	7.2 a. Record how much time you spend daily in real communication with individual children. b. Keep notes of what children tell you for future use. Remember past conversations and bring them up. EXAMPLE: "Lisa, is that the new dress you said your grandmother was making?" c. Keep a record of which children are talkative and which children are very quiet. Use this information in arranging small groups. Plan activities which will give quiet children extra encouragement to talk. EXAMPLE: Plan to eat with a quiet child. Watch where he likes to play and be there to spend time with him. Talk with his family to find out what his special interest are.
7.3 The intern will provide children with activities, encouragement and practice which fosters expressive communication skills. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	7.3 a. Select activities to foster expressive communication skills. Include these in lesson planning. b. Provide puppets to encourage children to talk and discuss. c. Avoid meeting children's needs before they have a chance to ask. d. Look at lesson plans and be sure activities are included which will encourage children to express themselves.
7.4 The intern will provide children with activities which encourage and foster receptive communication skills. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	7.4 a. Use music, story telling and games which gradually increase the child's ability to actively listen for longer periods of time. NOTE: Active listening means how long the child is really interested not how long he can be forced to sit still. b. Develop a signal you can use when you want the children's attention. NOTE: Holding up your hand or flipping a light switch is better than yelling.

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
	c. Include in lesson plans activities for fostering careful noticing and listening. EXAMPLE: A nature walk affords many chances to be silent and hear birds, wind, crickets, etc.
	d. Allow children to do free drawing of what is important to them.
	e. Use dramatic play, literature and music t to encourage "acting out" characters, feelings and interests.
	f. Keep a picture file and rotate pictures in the center often. Encourage children to "read" the pictures for affective and cognitive content.
	g. Use suggestions in card file under Language Dramatic Play, Music.
	h. List nonverbal skills you use in the classroom.
	i. Plan for ways of receiving nonverbal communication. EXAMPLE: Study pictures "Read" weather signs "Read" lables on favorite food containers. "Act out" activities and ask children to guess what you are doing. If a television is available, watch it with no sound and guess what is going on.
	j. Provide children with practice at following directions.
7⅝ The intern provides activities that will foster vocabulary growth in children.	7⅝ a. Plan for new words, gestures, signs in each set of lesson plans and post a list each week.
ASSESSMENT	b. Use teaching aids such as flannel boards, pictures, and field trips to teach new words and nonverbal messages.
_____ date/initial	

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
	c. Practice and use suggestions in study guide for teaching a new word.
7^6. The intern is able to tie the teaching of language to the conceptual development taking place in the classroom.	7^6. a. Select concept words which fit into each set of lesson plans and post along with regular vocabulary words.
	b. Using suggestions in the card file, plan small group activities to teach concept words.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	c. Make a list of concept words you want children to develop over a several week period. Beside each word list possible opportunities which might come up where you can reinforce that word. EXAMPLE: CONCEPT WORDS ARE BIG AND LITTLE PLACES I COULD POINT THEM OUT-- block area when child is building. Art area--pasting collage materials. Housekeeping--doll clothes.
7^7. The intern encourages creative use of language and non-verbal skills in the classroom.	7^7. a. Provide opportunities for children to add their own ideas to a conversation.
	b. Make a picture file.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	c. Use pictures and encourage children not only to describe but to make up a story about them.
	d. See card file ideas on making books with children.
	e. Show that you enjoy children's stories, nonsense, rhyming, and other linguistic creations.
	f. Keep in each child's folder notations or examples of stories, pictures, and books he has made which are creative.
	g. Use many of the suggestions filed under dramatic play to encourage actions and language that express a child's own ideas.

STUDY GUIDE

I. A. Communication skills are those skills by which we exchange information with each other. They include physical actions and gestures, facial expressions, creative activities such as art or music, and language both spoken and written.

EXAMPLES: Physical actions and gestures ---- a hug tells someone things are alright, and a wave of the hand means good-by. Policemen use gestures in directing traffic. The way you hold your head or walk can tell another how you feel.

Facial expressions ---- a frown or a smile or the look in your eyes can convey many messages to someone else. Messages about our emotions are the most common messages conveyed in this way.

Creative activities ---- a picture or painting gives many cues to be "read", such as what is happening, what is going to happen, what can you tell about objects or people in the picture? Labels and symbols on packages give us the cue to contents even without reading the words. Think about some music you like; how does it make you feel? What does it make you think of? How would you move to fast music?

Language ---- is a complex skill. We use both spoken and written words not only to exchange information with others but to organize our thoughts and actions. We need words to make judgements, comparisons, decisions, and plans.

B. The use of communication skills is a symbolic process and varies from language to language and culture to culture and even from family to family. We use gestures, actions, expressions, and language to stand for real feelings, facts, objects, or ideas. Learning to communicate means learning what symbols stand for the real things in one's surrounding culture.

EXAMPLE: A table is a real object--- the word table is not a table; it is only a group of sounds which are used in English to stand for the real object. If I want to tell you about a table, I could carry the object with me, which would be difficult, or I could let the word stand for it, as long as we both know the symbol. Let us say that I have no word for table. I could use other symbols. A picture or photograph, a table shaped with my fingers in the air, and a model created from materials at hand would all communicate the idea.

All day long we use our faces, our bodies and our words to tell things to other people. We frown and smile to show we like or dislike something. We hold our head and shoulders in a certain way when we are happy and

differently when we are sad. We talk with words and we talk with our hands; notice how often people you are talking with use their hands to help them say something. Think how you could tell someone "I need help" using only your hands.

Expressions of feeling are made with and without language. If you are angry, you might show it by frowning. You could shake your fist at the person you are angry with or hit him. Or you could tell him "I am angry with you because....." Think of something you like. What expressions, gestures, and words could you use to express that feeling?

In different languages and cultures, symbols are different. Words are different. "Perro" in Spanish, "clechaŋ" in Navajo, and "dog" in English are all symbols for the same animal. If you got down on your hands and knees and barked, you would no doubt have an action which would communicate "dog" in any of these languages. Gestures may vary as much as languages among different people and even expressions. Two really good friends may be able to read messages in each other's eyes that a stranger misses.

C. The need to understand these symbols and use them is great in all children. The extent to which this need is met depends upon the contact a child has with others, particularly adults and older children around him.

1. The child will learn symbols for things common in his own home. If gestures are used a lot, he will learn them; if language is used a lot, he will learn word symbols; if the family spends a great deal of time outdoors, he will learn the meaning of nature symbols; if he goes to the store often, he will associate labels with his favorite products; if books, pictures, and music are available, he will learn that they convey messages also.

2. The quantity and quality of communication adults have with the child will affect his rate of growth. If adults take time to give him names for things he encounters, answer questions, explain natural phenomena, and listen to his own ideas and thoughts, he will grow more rapidly in these skills.

3. The need for communication and verbal stimulation will also affect the child's growth.

   Children who have to ask for things instead of having all their needs met too quickly will learn to make their needs known. Children who play with other children need to develop language and non-verbal communication skills more than children who usually play alone. The child who goes with his parents to the grocery store, or for walks with his grandmother may learn more new words and has more to talk about than the child who is left at home.

II. Most children, if they have normal physical development for speech and hearing, go through predictable stages in the development of communication skills:

Infants begin by making random cries and reacting to noises and objects at random. As they grow they learn to attach meanings to the sounds and actions of others and to use crying as a means of communicating a message, such as "I am hungry". He is already learning to imitate symbols as he learns to respond to a smile.

By two, the child has learned much about symbolism in communication. He may know what "no" means and even that shaking your head means the same thing. He reacts when his name is spoken and to other common words and actions of the adults around him. He is also learning to copy these.

By the time the child reaches preschool, he nearly always has a large store of skills and knowledge about communication. He is able to learn new words readily, express his needs, thoughts, and ideas to some extent, and to interpret common gestures. He can "read" many things, pictures, labels, events such as weather changes, and picture signs. He can also listen to other children, to stories, and music for short periods of time with increasing interest.

During the preschool years the child sharpens all these skills. His vocabulary grows rapidly and his excursions away from home bring him into contact with more and more symbols, gestures, and experiences. He may practice his skills at every opportunity and one of his big tasks is to sort out the best tool to communicate a given message. For example, he is learning to ask for a drink instead of standing by the sink and pointing, and to say "I want to play with the truck next," instead of taking it.

By the time a child reaches six, if he has had a rich experience with language and non-verbal communication practice, he can also learn that printed words are also symbols for objects and ideas. Thus, prior experiences with verbal and non-verbal symbolism prepare him now for learning to read and write.

III. Language Assessment

Before you can design a program of classroom experiences to meet the developmental needs of each child, it is necessary to find out where the children are in their developing skills. What skills do they already have, and to what extent are they using them? Finding out the answers to these questions involves a task known as "assessment". Since the process of communication is so important to the child's development, it is very important that an assessment of communication skills take place early in the school year and regularly thereafter. Information gained from this assessment should be placed in the child's individual file folder and should be used by the staff in making plans, setting goals, and watching the child's growth. Some results from this assessment may indicate the need to refer a child for specialist evaluation and help.

The following pages contain a CHECK SHEET FOR LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT. Following the Check Sheet you will find Guidance for Language Assessment, with specific guidance and ideas for answering each item on the Check Sheet.

CHECK SHEET FOR LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

ASSESSOR'S NAME_____CHILD'S NAME_____AGE___YEARS___MONTHS

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY_____PREVIOUS SCHOOL EXPERIENCE_____

I HAVE OBSERVED THAT THIS CHILD:

PHYSICAL SKILLS

		YES	NO
A.	Hearing		
*1.	shows responses when I talk with him.	☐	☐
*2.	engages in verbal activities with other children.	☐	☐
*3.	responds to sounds around him.	☐	☐
4.	seeks out other children to play with.	☐	☐
B.	Auditory Discrimination		
*5.	can hear the difference between bell and drum.	☐	☐
*6.	can hear the difference between A and O sounds.	☐	☐
7.	can match 3 pairs of sound cans from a set of six (6).	☐	☐
C.	Enunciation		
8.	can make all basic consonant sounds in his language.	☐	☐
9.	can make all vowel sounds in his language.	☐	☐

LIST ANY SOUNDS HERE THAT THE CHILD HAS TROUBLE WITH:

_____

D.	Pre-printing		
*10.	can hold a crayon.	☐	☐
11.	can copy a circle.	☐	☐
12.	can copy a cross.	☐	☐
E.	Seeing		
*13.	can find what he wants to in the classroom.	☐	☐
*14.	works within the classroom without bumping into things often.	☐	☐
*15.	can participate in activities without always having to move closer.	☐	☐

	YES	NO
*16. can locate and pick up small objects without squinting.	☐	☐
F. Visual Discrimination		
*17. can name objects on cards.	☐	☐
18. can match design cards.	☐	☐
EXPRESSIVE SKILLS		
G. Using Language		
*19. talks.	☐	☐
20. volunteers information.	☐	☐
21. asks and answers questions.	☐	☐
22. participates in small group conversations.	☐	☐
*23. talks with others on the bus or at meal times.	☐	☐
24. talks with both adults and children.	☐	☐
H. Verbal and Non-verbal Communication		
25. usually expresses his needs verbally.	☐	☐
LIST EXAMPLES YOU HAVE OBSERVED:		
Verbal_____ Non-Verbal_____		
I. Descriptive Skills		
26. can describe what he is doing.	☐	☐
27. can describe something he did in the past.	☐	☐
28. can tell what he will do - make a plan.	☐	☐
J. Relationships		
29. can demonstrate through action: __over/under__in/out __big/little	☐	☐
30. can use language to describe: __on/off__over/under__in/out __big/little	☐	☐
31. can tell (with words) how a spoon and fork are alike and how they are different.	☐	☐
K. Comparison		
32. can make global comparison (big/little-only 2 sizes presented).	☐	☐

	YES	NO
33. can make fine comparison (bigger/smaller-more than 2 sizes).	☐	☐
L. Sequencing		
34. can arrange three pictures in order of the events they suggest.	☐	☐
35. can tell a personal account of something he did, in the order that it happened.	☐	☐
36. can listen to a short story and relate at least 3 events in order.	☐	☐
RECEPTIVE SKILLS		
M. Listening		
37. listens (pays attention) when sitting in a small group activity for up to five minutes.	☐	☐
38. listens to other children during play time.	☐	☐
39. seems to enjoy music and stories.	☐	☐
N. Following directions		
40. can follow one-step directions.	☐	☐
41. can follow two-step directions.	☐	☐

OTHER OBSERVATIONS WHICH MAY BE IMPORTANT:

GUIDANCE FOR LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

General Instructions

This language assessment is designed to be used in regular classroom situations--without "testing" the children in formal ways. Many of the items you should be be able to answer on the basis of prior observation--go ahead and check all the items you are sure you know the answers to for the child you are assessing. For some items you may need to set up special games or other learning situations which are described in the guidance blocks following the items. These games will give you the opportunity to observe the skills without having to sit the children down and "test" them.

There are several reasons for doing this type of assessment with all of the children in your class. One reason is to determine whether any of the children in your class have needs for special attention which you cannot provide. Such children should be referred to specialists for help or for further evaluation. This is a "general screening" type of assessment. It is intended only to indicate areas where further evaluation may be needed. It is not meant to be diagnostic; it is not designed to provide you with detailed information on each child's specific needs. Whenever the results indicate there may be a problem, the child should be referred for further evaluation. A NO response to any of the items marked with an asterisk (*) indicates a definite need for referral.

A second reason for doing this language assessment is for you to become familiar with the type of communication/language goals which are appropriate for preschool age children.

A third reason is to give you some information on the ability level of each of your children so that you can plan effectively. If you find, for instance, that 5 of your children have difficulty following two-step directions (item #41), this does not indicate that these children have a problem, it means that you

should provide them with more experience with two-step directions. The children who have already mastered this skill should be provided with other activities which are challenging to them.

This language assessment is designed to measure real communication skills, independent of the language (English, Spanish, Navajo, Hopi, Apache) they may take place in. Each question on this assessment should be answered with relation to the child's primary language--that language in which he is fluent, or in which he has the most ability. If any children in your class speak a language which you do not speak, you will have to have assistance from other members of the teaching team to complete that child's language assessment.

PHYSICAL SKILLS

A. Hearing

*1. shows responses when I talk with him.
*2. engages in verbal activities with other children.
*3. responds to sounds around him.
4. seeks out other children to play with.

Guidance

Observe the child in natural settings and check your answers to the questions. If all the answers are "yes", you can be sure that the child hears general sounds and conversation. If you are unsure about question #1, come up quietly behind the child and speak his/her name to see if he/she responds.

B. Auditory Discrimination

*5. can hear the difference between bell and drum.
*6. can hear the difference between A and O sounds.
7. can match 3 pairs of sound cans from a set of six (6).

Guidance

Observe for these skills during group games. If you are in doubt about any child, take time to play games with him individually. Use games such as a variation of "Simon Says"--instruct the children to take a step forward when they hear the bell, but not if they hear the drum. Children who move incorrectly have to start over again. Give a reward to the child who reaches

a goal first--let him/her hit the drum and bell the next time. (Be careful to position the drum and bell where the children can't see them, or you may be testing the children's visual discrimination instead of auditory.)
Make up another game to see if the children can tell the difference between "A" and "O" sounds. Use words that sound the same except for the "A" or "O", like ball and bowl, tall and toll, cat and coat.
Make a set of 6 sound cans, using the little cans that film comes in, or some other kind of small cans or bottles that are all the same and opaque (you can't see through them). In two put one small pebble, in two put some sand, and in two put some popcorn. Play games with the children which require one child at a time to match 2 cans (find the two that sound the same).

C. Enunciation

8. can make all basic consonant sounds in his language.
9. can make all vowel sounds in his language.

Guidance

Listen to the child's normal speech to see if there are any sounds in his first language that he has trouble with. You may find it helpful to put together a set of pictures (cut out of magazines or drawn or photographs) of objects and animals and people which you can ask the child to name. The whole set should contain all of the basic consonant and vowel sounds.

D. Pre-printing

*10. can hold a crayon.
11. can copy a circle.
12. can copy a cross.

Guidance

Observe the child during art activities. Can he hold a crayon and/or a pencil? Can he copy basic forms like a circle or a cross?

E. Seeing

*13. can find what he wants to in the classroom.
*14. works within the classroom without bumping into things often.
*15. can participate in activities without always having to move closer.

Guidance

Observe the child during normal classroom activities. You may be able to answer these questions about most of the children because you have already observed these things. Spend more time observing children you think may have a problem.

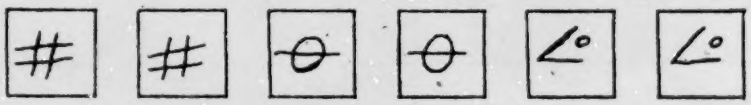
F. Visual Discrimination

*17. can name objects on cards.
18. can match design cards.

Guidance

Make a set of large cards with pictures (or use the same cards you used for "C. Enunciation"). Ask each child to name the object on the card while sitting in a circle or small group. Use simple objects, such as: cup, comb, shoe, table, car, bread, wagon.

For question #18, make a set of symbol cards, with two each of several different symbols. Use the same color of ink or magic marker (black) on the same color of paper or card (white or cream colored). Here are some examples of cards:



Make enough different pairs of cards for each child to have one pair. Use the cards to move the children from a group activity (like circle time) to individual activities: separate the cards into two groups with one of each symbol in each group--give each child one card from one group--lay the cards in the other group out on the floor or on a table. Have each child match his card to one on the floor or table and go to select another activity. Do this several days and notice if any child consistently has trouble matching the cards.

G. Using Language

*19. talks.
20. volunteers information.
21. asks and answers questions.
22. participates in small group conversations.
*23. talks with others on the bus or at meal times.
24. talks with both adults and children.

Guidance

Observe the child in play and small group time, on the bus, at meal times, and outdoors. Answer as many questions as you can. If you have difficulty answering any of the questions about the child, engage him in direct casual conversation. For many children you can answer these questions almost at once if you have been in the classroom with them for several weeks or more. For some, you will need to observe them closely for several days.

H. Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

25. usually expresses his needs verbally.

Guidance

Observe the child in normal classroom situations. Make notes of specific examples of how he expresses his needs: at meal time, does he ask for the milk, or point to it? if he is mad at another child, does he tell you what happened, or just cry, or does he hit the other child? After you have listed several examples, answer the question--does he usually express his needs verbally?

I. Descriptive Skills

26. can describe what he is doing.
27. can describe something he did in the past.
28. can tell what he will do - make a plan.

Guidance

The purpose of these questions is to see whether the child can use language to organize his actions. To answer question #26, talk to the child while he is playing or involved with some materials. Ask him to tell you about what he is doing. Write down his answer.

To answer questions #27 and #28, ask children during circle time to tell about something they did at home, or somewhere other than at school, and to tell about what they plan to do: today at free-choice time; tomorrow; on the weekend; or when they go out to the playground. Do this as part of an informal circle conversation time, and allow the children's to direct the conversation, but guide it to involve children who don't usually respond. Don't try to get all the children to respond on the same day. Write down the children's responses and answer the questions for those children who responded. If you have tried several different days to get a particular child to tell you about something he did or plans to do, and he doesn't respond, or tries, but can't make himself understood, answer NO to these questions.

J. Relationships

29. can demonstrate through action: __over/under__in/out__big/little
30. can use language to describe: __on/off__over/under__in/out__big/little
31. can tell (with words) how a spoon and fork are alike and how they are different.

Guidance

For questions #29 and #30, play a follow the leader game with a small group of children--set up a course that takes children over a bridge, under a table, in a tunnel; that has them hop over a little block and a big block. Stop them to ask questions, like: "Where is John?--John is in the tunnel." Answer question #31 after talking with the child at mealtime about his spoon and fork.

K. Comparison

32. can make global comparison (big/little - only 2 sizes presented).
33. can make fine comparison (bigger/smaller - more than 2 sizes).

Guidance

Play an individual game with the child. Use objects which the child can handle like balls, rocks, or dolls. First show the child only 2 sizes of objects and ask "which one is big? Which one is little?"
For fine comparison (#33), give the child 3 or more sizes, ask him "which one is bigger than this one (touch one of the middle sizes)? Which one is smaller?"

L. Sequencing

34. can arrange three pictures in order of the events they suggest.
35. can tell a personal account of something he did, in the order that it happened.
36. can listen to a short story and relate at least 3 events in order.

Guidance

For item #34, give the child 3 pictures that tell some kind of a story. Ask the child to arrange the pictures in the order that the story happened: "Which picture comes first? Which one is next? Which one is last?"
Ask the child to tell you why he has arranged the pictures as he did. (Even though he may not arrange them the way you would, he may have very good reasons for arrangement, in which case you should answer YES to #34.
For #35, ask one child at a time in a small conversation group to tell what they did before coming to school, or after they went home the day before.
For #36, select a picture book with a clear sequence of events. Read the story to the children, then ask them to tell you the story by looking at the pictures, and then without looking at the pictures. Do they get the main events of the story in order? (Tom went for a walk. He got lost. A policeman helped him. His mother was glad to see him.)

M. Listening

37. listens (pays attention) when sitting in a small group activity for up to five minutes.
38. listens to other children during play time.
39. seems to enjoy music and stories.

Guidance

#37 - Does the child listen (pays attention and shows comprehension by responding) during small group activities of up to 5 minutes length?
#38 - Does the child listen to other children during classroom activities and play?
#39 - Does the child seem to enjoy listening to music and stories?

N. Following directions

40. can follow one-step directions.
41. can follow two-step directions.

Guidance

These items can be assessed in a group game like Simon Says or a game in which each child in turn draws a card on which is a direction he must follow. (You or another adult will have to read the cards for the children, of course.) Start the first day with one-step directions (Simon Says "stand on one leg", or a card which reads: walk around a table). Check YES for all the children who can play this game well. If any children have trouble following the one-step directions, let them continue practicing. The other children can go on to two-step directions (Simon Says "hop like a frog, then bark like a dog", or a card which reads: hop to a chair and sit down on it). Children who do this well should have #41 marked YES.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS WHICH MAY BE IMPORTANT

Guidance

Have you observed other things about this child's language and communication abilities by now that don't fit anywhere else on this language assessment form?

IV. You may have children in your class who have special needs or problems, and require the services of specialists. When you have done the Language Assessment on all of the children, you need to review the results to determine whether you will refer any of the children for further evaluation and specialist help.

If a child was marked NO to any of the items marked with an asterisk (*), he should be referred for evaluation. But first, check him again on the item, and ask others of the staff if they agree with your assessment.

Always check your NO answers to the (*) items by trying the same task in a different way. If you have marked NO to item #5 on the basis of your observations during a group game, it is now appropriate to take the one child aside, ask him to close his eyes, and listen while you sound the bell or the drum. Then ask him which one you sounded. Be sure you don't mark him NO because he doesn't know the names of the bell and drum: ask him to point to the one he heard if you are not sure he knows the names.

All of the (*) items, except for #17, #23, and #40, indicate the need for evaluation by a doctor if marked NO. The doctor will check the child for physical problems. If the doctor finds no physical problem, he may refer the child to a speech pathologist or a psychologist for further evaluation, or you may need to make such referrals yourself.

A NO response to #17, #23, or #40, would indicate you should talk with the child's parents to determine whether the child acts the same at home as at school, and a referral to a psychologist is indicated.

If a child is marked YES on all of the (*) items, he probably does not need further evaluation unless he was marked NO on 16 or more other items. In this case, he should be referred to a psychologist for further testing.

V. In every classroom there will be a great deal of variation in the communication skills of the children. Development and growth must be on an individual basis, and each teacher must know where her children are, where she wants them to go, and how she can help them get there. While the basic objectives will be different for each child depending upon what they are already capable of, there are general goals which we can set for most children between the ages of 3 and 6. Even these will vary among different groups of children. Read the goals below. How do you feel about them for the children in your group? Remember they are only suggestions. Work out a set for your own students.

GOAL (Long-range expectations for the child)	OBJECTIVE (A sample of what the child might accomplish this week)
1. To be able to use language to express his own needs, wants, and ideas.	John will learn to ask for food to be passed to him at the lunch table.
2. To be able to use language to organize his own thinking and actions.	John will be able to plan with the teacher what he wants to do during a "free choice" time block.

3.	To be able to see and communicate relationships among objects and ideas.	John will demonstrate that he can group objects used at meal time from a collection of objects and tell what each is named and its use.
4.	To learn to use language creatively.	John will be able to look at a picture and make up a story beyond the specific information the picture gives.
5.	To be able to put simple events in stories or real life in sequence.	John will be able to listen to a two-part story and tell what happened first and last.
6.	To be able to listen to short stories, musical selections, and other children.	John will be able to enjoy listening to the story, "Are You My Mother?" in a small group.
7.	To be able to follow one and two-step directions.	John will be able to follow the directions, "Please wash your hands and lay a napkin for each place at the table."
8.	To be able to make fine auditory discriminations.	John will be able to use sound cans containing rice, sand, and sunflower seeds and group them in correct pairs.
9.	To make fine visual discriminations	John will be able to match cards containing designs correctly.
10.	To be able to correctly hold a crayon or pencil and make it do what he wants it to do.	Can make a drawing of an object of his own choosing holding crayons correctly between thumb and first two fingers.
11.	To be able to make all consonant and vowel sounds used in his primary language.	John will be able to repeat all vowel sounds in English, AEIOU.

VI. There are specific techniques which teachers should use in order to help children foster language development communication skills. You will need to plan and practice these until they become a natural part of your own behavior.

	TECHNIQUE	EXAMPLE
1.	Take advantage of the situation to meet your goals.	Let's say you want Lisa to learn "big" and "little" this week. She is dressing dolls in the housekeeping center. You can use the words, "This dress is too BIG for this doll," or "Is this dress too BIG or too LITTLE?"

2.	Use time wisely.	Small groups are better than big ones because you can watch skills and everyone gets to talk more. When children are playing, it is not coffee break time; be there to watch for openings.
3.	Plan ahead for opportunities that are likely to come up.	Tommy needs to learn "in" and "out". He likes the block area; I can help him with the words as he moves his car in and out of the shop he built.
4.	Use complete sentences with the children.	Say, "The books are on the shelf in the corner" instead of, "over there".
5.	Give categories whenever possible.	Say, "That fruit is a peach," instead of, "It's a peach.
6.	Give enough information but not too much.	Saying "Your cup is red," is valuable to the child in identifying his own cup. If you say, "This is a can opener; see how it opens the can?", it is not necessary to point out its redness since it has nothing to do with the situation--what a can opener is.
7.	Model over and over in different situations the correct word when the child does not know it. If he is willing, ask him to repeat it.	"What color is this block?" If he doesn't know, say "The color of this block is green. Can you say 'green'?"
8.	Tactfully echo correct sentences and words in such a way that it does not sound as if you are correcting the child.	The child says, "Want drink". You might say, "You want a drink of water; alright." Do not make him repeat it correctly as he will learn in time.
9.	Use correct words and then explain them if necessary. Don't avoid a new word because the children will not know it.	If children know "mitten" but not "glove", you might ask, "Bring me the glove; a glove is like a mitten with special places for fingers."
10.	Expect verbal responses from the children.	Give children time and opportunity to offer answers, words, and ideas. "And what do you think happened next?"
11.	Ask questions that require more than "yes" or "no" answers as often as you can.	Say, "What do you think will happen to the puppy?" instead of "Did the puppy get lost?"
12.	Gradually add more to your expectations for each child's response.	If Tommy can say "ball" to begin with, gradually build upon this until he can say, "I want to play with the ball."

VII. A. The ability to communicate with others, to assign meaning to symbols and use them, is vital to successfully living with people, understanding and appreciating one's culture, and to success in the school setting. The preschool years are a time when these skills should grow rapidly, particularly verbal skills. It is one of the most important functions of the preschool teacher to be able to assess where her students are in development of these skills, detect problems, and plan for growth. The following statements are important facts about the preschool child and communication development which every preschool teacher should know.

1. Communication skills seen in the preschool setting are a segment of total development built upon past experiences and feeding into new ones. Children who have not had good past experiences will need extra help in preschool, and it is imperative that in preschool years, children have a rich experience with symbols to build upon later. The skills can be divided into two groups.

	EXPRESSIVE SKILLS	RECEPTIVE SKILLS
Non-Verbal	Actions and gestures	Interpreting, observing
	Facial expressions	Noticing, understanding
	Drawing and other creating	"Reading", looking, experiencing
Verbal	Talking	Listening
	Writing	Reading
Child Needs:	Speech, Eye-hand physical activities	Audio and visual discrimination

2. The language a child speaks makes little difference in developing these skills. The best preparation for learning a second language and for learning to read and write later will be a rich experience and much practice using his primary language. The skills of expressing himself, using speech and gestures, listening to others, using language to organize and plan his activities, and developing cognitively can be developed in any language. Once the skill is growing well, the symbols (specific words of one language or another) can more easily be learned.

3. Communication skills are not to be isolated to be taught. "Language Lessons" are ways of teaching children to copy but not use skills. To be effective, language and non-verbal skills must be encouraged during the regular activities of each day.

   EXAMPLE: The most effective way to teach children about a new fruit is to serve it for lunch or snack. You might say while children are eating, "We are having grapes today; these grapes are colored purple and they are round in shape. They taste sweet." In this way children have a real experience with the object and the meaning of the words you are using.

4. The need to communicate is so great that some development will take place on its own no matter what adults do. This will be haphazard and accidental. While this kind of learning is important, the teacher cannot afford to rely only on it. She must have goals and objectives in mind at all times in order to measure where the child is and the effectiveness of her teaching.

EXAMPLE: Most children will learn such words as "in" and "out" in the context of their play. If the teacher does not know what words he wants them to learn and watch for the learning to take place, they may not learn more complex words, and in a group of twenty children, it is quite possible to not even notice that one or two children do not know the meaning of "in" and "out".

5. Children have many words or symbols for which they do not yet know the concept.

EXAMPLE: Have you ever head a child say something like, "Can we go yesterday?" This child knows the word "yesterday", and he probably knows the word "tomorrow", but he does not have the correct meaning to go with them. Later, with more experience in using time, and the words, with correct modeling from the teacher and maturity, this child will be able to attach the word he knows to the correct concept.

6. Children also have many concepts which they know but do not have the words for.

EXAMPLE: Tommy can match the red block to the red card with no trouble. He is aware of the concept "redness" long before he knows the word "red". Think of some of the things you just "know" but can't put into words, and you will be able to see how a child often feels.

7. Building an enlarged vocabulary is a major part of preschool programs. This vocabulary is both receptive (understanding a greater number of words, signs, and symbols) and expressive (using a greater number of words, actions, and symbols).

Developing vocabulary should take place in context of regular activities such as play, meal time, field trips, and games.

Select only a few new words in non-verbal symbols to teach at a time. Be sure they really are in context of the situation. Plan ahead what they will be as you are working out lesson plans.

EXAMPLE: You have decided to teach a week long unit on containers (things we keep something in). Words for vocabulary might be "box", "jar", "envelope", and "can". Concept words might be "inside" and "outside". To teach these words in context you will repeat them often as children use boxes, jars, envelopes, and cans to put things in and take out.
"I see you put the water <u>in</u> the jar." "Can you put your picture <u>in</u> the <u>envelope</u>?"
If you have posted these words and used them often during the week, it is almost certain your children will know them when the unit is over.

8. The process of symbolism or assigning meaning to things has several levels of skill. It is the job of the teacher to know these and be aware of what level the students are on. Then she must recognize when they are ready to add new skills and provide opportunities for growth.

Matching	Using real objects, the child can put like objects together.
Picture Discrimination	The child can recognize familiar objects in pictures.
Closure	The child can recognize or identify an object by seeing only part of it.
Association	The child can group objects not alike but related (things we eat with).
Verbal Response	The child can name the object.
Object Function	The child can tell or show what the object is used for.
Showing Relationship	The child can show an understanding of sequencing and can make comparisons and predictions.
Creativity	The child can tell and/or draw stories and make up rhymes.

9. The use of language is more than repetition. If we say to a child, "this is a red truck" and he says, "this is a red truck", he is repeating words, not using language. If, on the other hand, he says, "I am driving this red truck, and I am going to my grandmother's house for a picnic", he is using the words to express his own ideas. It is this use of language we are looking for rather than being content with repetition.

10. It is characteristic of four-year-olds that they are beginning to use language creatively. They can tell stories about unreal events, make up nonsense rhymes, tease, pretend, and play simple word games in their own language. This is a valuable step and should be encouraged at all times for it means that they are truly making language their own tool and going a step beyond copying adults.

11. In addition to helping children develop the communication skills she wants them to have, every teacher, sooner or later, must face the fact that children are also developing such skills she doesn't want them to have. Children everywhere pick up "dirty" words, gestures, insulting words, and "toilet" words as naturally as they pick up other things. It helps a teacher or parent to know that this comes naturally to all children sooner or later. There are other ideas which are helpful when children use such words and gestures too.

1. Young children are copiers, if they were not they would learn very little. When using such words and gestures they are copying what they have seen. They are often examples of expressions children know without knowing the meaning behind them. They often do not know the exact meaning nor the affective loading of such expressions when they use them.

2. One reason for using them is the shock value they have for adults. If you are very small and one simple word or gesture can send adults into a panic, you experience a feeling of power. As an adult you can minimize the use of "dirty" words by not over-reacting to them.

The question then becomes what can you do when children use communication skills you wish they didn't know.

1. Recognize that such things are common and that the child is not "bad" or sinful.
2. Tell him calmly that you do not like to hear that word, see that gesture, and would prefer that he not use it. (Do not make him feel "bad".)
3. Go on to something else and do not lecture or make too much of the incident.
4. Remind the child gently if you must but do not make an issue or a battle out of it.

Remember that cuss words, words and rhymes we call "toilet" words and words with sexual references are only one part of negative use of language. In addition, children are picking up words with racial loading, comments of physical characteristics of others and words which just generally hurt the feelings of others. An example might be a child who says "I won't be your friend unless you do what I want." Or the child who says "I will tell on you unless....." Again all children pick up such phrases as they come in contact with other children. Again they do not mean them with the same anger and permanence that adults use them. Even so the teacher must deal with such communications when they come up.

1. Do not make the child feel evil.
2. Do not make too much of the situation or blow it up out of proportion. Remember the children will forget it faster than you do.
3. Tell children that words are not weapons. They are not to be used to threaten or hurt other people. This is not something a small child learns quickly. We remind him when he needs reminding and know that when he is older he will be able to remind himself and think before he speaks.

B. There should be a conscious effort to provide for communication growth in the daily schedule.

1. Schedule should include time for talking and listening on the part of the children each day.

2. The schedule should provide for small group activities (no more than six children) which include stories, games, and skill-building tasks.

3. The schedule should provide for specific times when staff may work with the individual children, such as during "free choice" times.

4. The schedule should provide time and opportunity for non-verbal experiences, such as dramatic play and acting out activities, music listening, and creative expression.

C. Lesson planning, as a tool for providing balanced esperiences, should incorporate objectives for skill development.

1. Each lesson plan should include a list of vocabulary and concept words you want to teach.

2. Words should be posted where staff can be reminded of them.

3. EXAMPLE: Transportation Unit
Words: Car, boat, airplane, wagon, fly, float
Concepts: Fast, slow, up, down, forward, backward